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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how developmental programs in Georgia obtain and maintain their status as "Training Center." The establishment in Houston County, Georgia of a "Training Center," an innovative school outreach program that disseminates an early intervention program for high-risk 6-year olds, exemplifies how outreach services are provided that involve a four-step approach: awareness, training, follow-up and evaluation. The awareness phase informs the center's publics of what is being done. Training informs the administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals of the center's policies, procedures, and purposes. The follow-up phase of services provides technical assistance in the form of visits by Training Center staff who ensure that adopting systems maintain the integrity of the disseminated program. Evaluation reviews the overall effectiveness of center programs. Centers that employ this approach will facilitate state recognition and funding. (JAM)

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Dissemination and Training: Moving Toward State Impact

by

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Paper presented at Symposium
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The dissemination and training segment of the State Model for Educational Improvement is the logical outgrowth of the efforts preceding it. A project that has met the state validation criteria, has confirmed the effectiveness of its program and can demonstrate means whereby the program can be disseminated may make application to the State Department of Education to become a Training Center. If approved and funded, the Training Center provides services that involve the following four-step process: awareness, training, follow-up and evaluation.

At the present time, there are four Training Centers in operation throughout Georgia. They are: a center that disseminates a K-12 language arts program with a composition emphasis, a center that trains systems to implement a K-12 mathematics-by-objectives program, a center that diffuses an innovative demonstration school program that applies the effective school research and the Houston County center which disseminates an early intervention program for high-risk six-year-olds.

During the awareness phase of the model, Training Center staff utilize various means to inform systems throughout the

state about the programs being disseminated. Planned Awareness Sessions are held either at the Training Center or as a part of professional conferences, in-service meetings and graduate classes. At these sessions, oral presentations, slide shows, videos and a question and answer format are utilized. For those who are unable to attend an Awareness Session, newsletters and brochures published by the Training Centers make information available by mail. Furthermore, media coverage in the form of educational journal entries, newspaper articles and television "human interest spots" reach an even larger audience. Another awareness approach consists of having interested parties visit the exemplary classrooms that comprise a part of the Training Center. There, visitors have the opportunity to observe and experience the Training Center program.

Finally, one of the most effective awareness techniques is the informal "word of mouth" approach. Satisfied adopting systems inform neighboring systems who, in turn, contact the Training Centers for further information.

In the past year, Houston County Training staff have visited and presented programs throughout the state in addition to inviting interested parties to the Center. Plans for a video taped "tour of exemplary classrooms" are underway and will provide a close facsimile of on-site visits for those unable to travel.

Step two in the delivery service process concerns training which takes place after the superintendent of the adopting system and the Training Specialist sign a memorandum of agreement.

This agreement addresses the responsibilities of the two parties and petitions a commitment from each to carry out these responsibilities. The length of training available to adopting systems varies from program to program and may occur at either the Training Center or adoption site. The sessions involve administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals and cover such topics as overview and purpose of the program, curriculum, utilization of materials, classroom management and evaluation procedures. In addition, a plan for management of the adoption is established during training.

Training conducted by the Houston County Center requires two days. Teachers and paraprofessionals attend both sessions, while an administrator is asked to attend the first session and is invited to the second.

The follow-up phase of services provided by the Training Center is employed primarily to insure that adopting systems maintain the integrity of the program being disseminated. The Center provides technical assistance in the form of visits by Training Center personnel, classroom observations, video tapes and any other procedure that will assist systems in quality implementation. Occasionally, differences in system needs require that adaptations be made. Training Center staff work with each system to adapt the program to best provide for these needs as long as the general procedures and philosophy are not altered. The Houston County Training Center has adapted its program so that it not only meets the needs of the regular classroom teacher

but also Chapter I and Migrant Education teachers.

The follow-up phase has been found to make the greatest difference in providing quality dissemination and implementation. Problems often don't arise until well after training when the program is underway. Through technical assistance, the Training Center is able to work with adopting systems to solve problems before they become major obstacles.

The final step in the dissemination process is that of evaluation. Evaluation serves a two-fold purpose: to judge the effectiveness of the Training Center and to assess the integrity of each adoption. In analyzing the effectiveness of the Training Center, annual reviews are conducted by on-site teams. Training materials and procedures are examined, exemplary sites are visited and records are inspected.

Of course, the effectiveness of the Training Center can best be determined by judging the effectiveness of the adoptions. Adoptions are evaluated via follow-up observations and statistical procedures involving pre- and post-testing. Each Training Center employs an evaluation specialist, usually university affiliated, to aid in analyzing data to confirm the usefulness of the program for each adopting system. Base line data from the Training Center makes it possible for systems to predict resulting gains for their students because of the program.

As the Houston County Center has been in operation for less than a year, data are still being compiled for use by adopting systems. In addition, evaluation of adapted programs is underway

to provide further information as to the attributes of various approaches.

Aside from the services provided by the Training Centers, there are two ingredients that make a good program implementation possible. One is planning and the other is funding.

As part of the training session, each Training Center aids each adopting system in planning its implementation through carefully considered management components. These components vary according to the program but generally include activities in the areas of planning, organization, staff development, materials, implementation, and evaluation. The adopting system is required to chart these activities on an outline, designating the person responsible and the expected date for completing each one. As part of the evaluation process, the Training Center reviews the outline and verifies the completion of each activity.

As for funding, the services provided by the Training Center do not cover the complete cost of implementation. While the training itself is free to adopting systems, money for travel to and from the demonstration sites, stipends and materials must be generated either through the adopting system or through various funding sources.

One of these sources is the State Department of Education in the form of Innovation Program Adoption Grants, which may be awarded to systems that opt to implement a program being disseminated by one of the Training Centers. These grants, which require a predetermined percentage match that varies from system to system,

cover initial implementation costs up to approximately $2500 per adoption. A system may only apply for one Adoption Grant per year.

For the last fiscal year, 10 Adoption Grants were awarded through the Houston Center alone. These grants enabled adopting systems to provide the best possible initial implementation by furnishing money for equipment, materials and travel to the Center.

In conclusion, the dissemination process described above is seen as a final step in taking developmental programs, validating them and making them available for state impact. Educational improvement can, indeed, occur through the combined efforts of local systems, State Department and university personnel. Evaluation of these efforts at all stages assures that quality programs are accessible to systems statewide.